



# IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **MINIDOKA COUNTY BENEFITS FROM \$18.4 MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE**

Last year, Minidoka County residents and businesses received \$18.4 million from Department of Health & Welfare programs that help people in need. The investment benefits every one of the county's 19,300 residents. Of Idaho's 44 counties, Minidoka County ranks number 17 in per capita outlay of Health & Welfare dollars. The county's per capita spending ranked 28 in 2003.

The disbursement of state and federal tax dollars amounts to \$951 for every man, woman and child residing in Minidoka County. This compares to \$692 per capita in 2003 and includes citizens who may not receive a single direct service from the Department. Nearly all of the per capita increase was due to Medicaid spending. The 2004 statewide average is \$839 per capita.

The Department distributed \$1.15 billion in Idaho communities in 2004. These funds came from Medicaid, additional payments to hospitals, Food Stamps, the Idaho Child Care Program, the Women, Infants and Children nutritional program, foster care and a variety of other assistance programs.

"This is an investment for all Minidoka County residents," says Health & Welfare Director Karl Kurtz. "These are tax dollars put to good use because they are used to help people become healthy and productive. This money goes go to foster care for children in crisis, substance abuse treatment for adults and adolescents, improvements and operations at the local hospital, and dozens of other badly needed services."

"This is as much about sustaining communities as it is investing," adds Kurtz. "By providing programs that support people, we are helping communities and their residents build the endurance and strength they need to remain vital. Everyone profits from this investment, not just those who use Department programs. This isn't just me pounding my chest. That's what community leaders tell us."

Minidoka County Commissioner Lynn Hunsaker says, “The Department money and programs are important. They work for young single parents and the older population. The money is going to the right people. Sometimes it’s a mother with no income and only thing she has is Food Stamps. Medicaid takes some of the pressure off our indigent care program, but it still doesn’t fill all the demand. A lot of improvements to our hospital, which is one of the best in Idaho, have come from Department programs.”

Last year, the Department’s Medicaid Division spent \$15 million on health care for residents of the county — \$4 million more than in 2003. A large share of the dollars go to Minidoka Memorial Hospital. The hospital also received \$360,000 in extra payments called Federal Upper Payment Limits and Disproportionate Share. These programs compensate hospitals for low Medicaid reimbursement. The extra money can be used for any purpose so anyone using the hospital can potentially benefit from those dollars.

“We are using the money to correct fire and life safety issues in our building. It doesn’t cover the repairs, but we used it to get additional funds,” says Hospital Administrator Carl Hansen. “We would not be doing what we’re doing without those funds.”

All Medicaid payments to the hospital totaled \$1.1 million.

Minidoka County residents received \$1.1 million in Food Stamps to help feed their families, spending \$333,500 with local grocers, including \$39,000 at Swensen’s Magic Market in Paul, which employs 24 people.

Department spending helps people, and it has an upside for business, according to Idaho economist John Church. “This is not lost money. The spending is an investment. It goes back into the economy. If an employer came to town and spent this much money we would be elated. People need to remember that a big chunk of this is federal money which is a huge return on our taxes. This comes back and helps stimulate the economy and it helps people.”

Kurtz adds, “Not only is the Department money a human investment, but it creates jobs and maintains healthy businesses. These dollars recycle numerous times in each community and help us keep the high quality of life we enjoy in Idaho. This is a wise use of taxpayer dollars because the money spent in the community often stays in the community. The dollars are spent again and again to help create jobs and an infrastructure that provides healthy and safe neighborhoods.”

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(**Editors:** Interviews are available on request. Contact Ross Mason at 334-0693 or Regional Director John Hathaway at 316-0620 for more information.)

**More information on Health & Welfare's  
investment in every Idaho County  
can be found online at  
<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov>**